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Secret CIA Sessions With Congress Units Hit

By the Associated Press

The agents from the Central Intelligence Agency take their places outside the door in a lobby of Congress.

Their director slips in. A few of his aides follow. Then come a handful of Congress members and a single committee staff man to help them.

But no one else goes by.

The director, John McCone, briefs the Congress members on CIA activities. He and his aides then field questions for two, perhaps three hours. No one keeps a record.

The session ends, and the Congress members hurry back to their offices, their new knowledge locked to themselves.

This procedure, repeated perhaps two dozen times a year, is the one through which Congress keeps its eye on the vast, varied and secret operations of the CIA.

Representative Lindsay, Republican of New York, who is not a participant in any of these sessions, is not satisfied with them. "We are working in the dark," he says, "or at least in the semi-twilight."

Mr. Lindsay and some colleagues have proposed that Congress create a joint Senate-House committee, with a full staff, to supervise closely the activities of the CIA.

But other members of Congress, especially those who attend the sessions, say the supervision is adequate. And they add that the CIA is far too secret and sensitive an operation to have Congress constantly peering over its shoulder.

What is the present supervision like? Does Congress look long and hard enough? How many hours? Who does the job?

Some aspects of Government surveillance are almost as hush-hush as CIA operations, but here is the partial picture pieced together from congressional sources:

Three congressional subcommittees have jurisdiction over either the operations or appropriations of the CIA.

The Senate has a six-man

members of the Armed Services and Appropriations committees. The House has two subcommittees, one made up of 10 members of the Armed Services Committee, the other of an unknown number of members of the Appropriations Committee.

The House Armed Services subcommittee on the CIA is headed by Representative Vinson, Democrat of Georgia, and includes Representatives L. Mendel Rivers, Democrat of South Carolina; Hebert, Democrat of Louisiana; Price, Democrat of Illinois; Charles E. Bennett, Democrat of Florida; Huddleston, Democrat of Alabama; Arends, Republican of Illinois; Bray, Republican of Indiana; Bob Wilson, Republican of California; and Osmer, Republican of New Jersey.

Representative Norblad, Republican of Oregon, who was a member of this subcommittee several years ago, recently told the House "we met annually—one time a year, for a period of 2 hours in which we accomplished virtually nothing."

But a present member of the subcommittee, who would not allow his name to be used, said the group now meets at least once a month with Mr. McCone and has "Frank, open, and wide discussions" lasting as long as 3 hours.

He said the subcommittee

does not go into every detail of CIA operations but surveys the significant activities.

No stenographic record is kept at these sessions, which do not touch on specific appropriations for the CIA.

This is left in the hands of the Appropriations subcommittee, which hides the CIA appropriation — believed to be more than a half-billion dollars a year—among the appropriations of various other agencies so neither the rest of Congress nor the public can know exactly how much money the agency gets.

Won't Reveal Names

The House Appropriations Committee refuses to reveal which of its members belong to the CIA subcommittee and how many times they meet a year.

But it is a safe guess that it meets with Mr. McCone about the same number of times as the subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee and that its membership includes at least Representative Cannon, Democrat of Montana, chairman of the full committee, and Representatives Mahon, Democrat of Texas, and Ford, Republican of Michigan.

The members of the Senate CIA subcommittee are Senators Russell, Democrat of Georgia; Harry F. Byrd, Democrat of Virginia; Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi; Saltonstall, Republican of Massachusetts; Hayden, Democrat of Arizona, and Milton R. Young, Republican of North Dakota.

The least number of times they have met with the CIA

chief in a year has been two; the most, six.

On occasion, some committee other than the three CIA subcommittees moves into the CIA act.

Just recently, for example, the House Foreign Affairs Committee had a session with Mr. McCone and John Richardson, the former head of CIA operations in Viet Nam.